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EAGLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

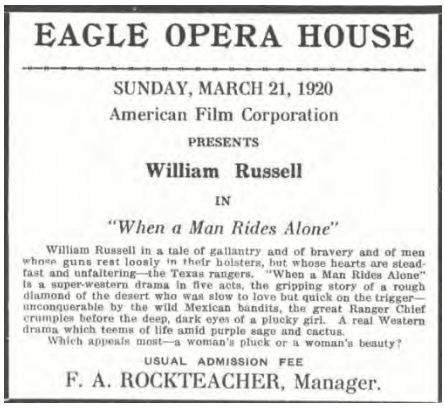
In Their Own Words
*Curated by Gina Neist*
From the late 1800s through the mid-20th Century, the Eagle Opera House on Main Street was a center of activity in the Eagle area, with minstrel and variety shows, plays, concerts, and movies. Here are the recollections of two local residents that were printed in past EHS newsletters. Visit the EHS website at *eaglehistoricalsociety.org* for more information on the Eagle Opera House.

The Eagle Opera House by Elaine Jones Cook, EHS Newsletter, Summer 1999




My brothers and sister and I were reminiscing about the Eagle Opera House. This is what we remember.

I, being the oldest, recollected the home talent show sponsored by the WLS Lulabelle & Scotty Show. While I did not participate, my little sister, Ruth Anne did. I expect she opened the show, because she sang, "Howdy Do, Everybody, Howdy Do" and did her little tap dance. This was a big show for Eagle, and I can remember all the participants sitting on hay bales on the stage, clapping and providing excitement for all the contestants. There was a huge curtain covering the stage, with pictures and advertising painted on it. Wooden folding chairs covered the huge floor.


EAGLE OPERA HOUSE

SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 1920
American Film Corporation
PRESENTS
**William Russell**
IN
*"When a Man Rides Alone"*

William Russell in a tale of gallantry and of bravery and of men whose guns rest loosly in their holsters, but whose hearts are steadfast and unfaltering—the Texas rangers. "When a Man Rides Alone" is a super-western drama in five acts, the gripping story of a rough diamond of the desert who was slow to love but quick on the trigger—unconquerable by the wild Mexican bandits, the great Ranger Chief crumples before the deep, dark eyes of a plucky girl. A real Western drama which teems of life amid purple sage and cactus.
Which appeals most—a woman's pluck or a woman's beauty?

USUAL ADMISSION FEE
F. A. ROCKTEACHER, Manager.

John and Dick remembered the Rottner Players, who brought their show to Eagle. It seems what they remembered most was the 5 or 10 cents Dad gave them to buy a box of taffy, one of which contained a prize. They never knew what the prize was because they never won.

The hall was also used for dances and wedding receptions. Lest we forget, the 8th and 10th grade graduations of Eagle State Graded School were held in the hall, as well as the Palestine School graduation ceremony.

The Masonic Hall was located in the upstairs portion of the Opera House, where it remained for many years.

The Eagle Opera House/Masonic Temple by Doc Crawley, EHS Newsletter, Winter 2001

The Eagle Opera House, or Masonic Temple, was the center of attraction during the 1930s and 40s. It was the largest building in town with the exception of the Catholic Church and had the only gym or theatre around. The chairs were attached to boards with six to ten attached so that they could be moved to the side to provide an open space or left in rows like a theatre.




One of my earliest memories of the place was when they had a huge "home talent" show sponsored by WLS and the National Barn Dance from Chicago. The first part of the show was all the school children performing recitations, dances, singing, playing piano, etc. I was about ten years old and acted as the master of ceremonies and introduced each act with clever reports, such as, "Come on Jean, tickle those keys!" After an intermission, the adults in the area performed. They had bales of straw around the stage and the performers all sat on them.

Every year the sophomore class would put on a class play. My mother, Eleanor Crawley, would direct. Every member of the class would have to have a part, and sometimes it was like putting square pegs in round holes. One time, Mary Lou Stead became so nervous before coming on stage, she swallowed her smelling salts and became very ill. It was always a three-act play and between acts, grade school children would perform.

In the spring, it was the site of graduation exercises. There would be the eighth grade and the tenth grade complete with Valedictorian and Salutatorian addresses along with the graduation speaker. The stage would be covered with lilacs, purple and white, along with the class motto, and the odor was so sweet it almost made you sick.